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Cape Verdean Oral History Project: Interview with Anthony Ramos by Alberto Torres Pereira

Anthony Dennis Ramos

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CAPE VERDEAN ORAL HISTORY

Tape # ~~28~~ 17

Tuesday, March 5, 1974

Anthony Dennis Ramos
[redacted] Roma Street
East Providence, R.I.

Alberto Torres Pereira, Interviewer

- 000- opening remarks. Born 1944 (30 yrs. old) in Providence, Lying-In Hospital
- 015- parents purchased house in 1930's during Depression, was stevedore-laborer
- 019- 2 groups in East Providence, mostly immigrants or children of immigrants - Italian and Cape Verdeans. In context of American racism, was strange that one white and one black group grew up in relative harmony. A "cultural exchange."
- 030- Quatrauchi owned much land, mostly swamp land, purchased by Cape Verdean and Italian families
- 038- Parents did not talk about their background. Talks of picture (c.1880) of relatives dressed Edwardian style. Comment: "I remember Momma - in blackface."
- 061- Grandfather was rogue, sailor; wore ring in his ear; lived on Water St. Ramos' brother ran away from home to live with adventurous grandfather. Mother's father dead before Depression. Family fairly wealthy in area: carpenter, house-builder. Depression wiped out savings.
- 075- Describes friendship with white Portuguese. Some hostility in black side of the family. Funeral of grandmother described.
- 090- Father from island of Brava, Cape Verde; grandparents from S. Nicolau or St. Vincente. Father to America in 1920 at age 18. Mother first generation Cape Verdean (high school grad) Great Grandfather was German Jew.
- 108- Ramos' father had general education, family owned packet ships. Sailed, at 12, for three years around the Mediterranean.
- 118- Ramos' grandfather was priest on islands; Ramos' grandmother was one of his wives.
- 129- discussion of Cape Verdean-American Federation. Ramos came from California to R.I. to attend the Convention at the First Unitarian Church, Benefit St., Providence. Had discussed with National Geographic Society possibility of doing a film on the Cape Verdean Americans.
- 180- Rejects status as a Conscientious Objector; primary concern was not to kill in the war.

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- 180- (cont.) Political manipulation; quotes Quakers, SDA, etc., who were using so-called Conscientious Objectors.
- 198- 1964, at Southern Illinois University.
Discusses repulsion at draft board and examination.
Explored Conscientious Objector position and found it untenable.
Drafted, he and wife went to Chicago (to wife's parents' home) and then to Canada for 8 months (no problems).
- 267- Hears of Martin Luther King's murder, calls Boston Resistance people. Sanctuary in Boston church refused, Universalist Church in Providence allows sanctuary. T.V., radio interviews, F.B.I. drags him from church. \$10,000 bail raised by parents. 1 year job on Thayer St., Research and Design Institute. Arrested by police for standing on top of a car.
- 355- At police station, claims brutality, refuses to be fingerprinted. To lineup, claims brutality.
Story of non-violent demonstrations at state prison; political prisoners.
- 498- Cape Verdeans aware of cultural heritage from early youth.
- 515- Cape Verdean negation of their blackness arose from their refusal to accept status of black which was one of inferiority.
- 530- Discusses prison. Is thought to be an African prince because he is Cape Verdean. Muslim movement creates separation of races (by Muslim leaders).
- 573- Discusses searching for Cape Verdean history through reading.
- 597- Ramos back to Providence; Cape Verdeans seen as special group, not absorbed.
- 615- Sees younger Cape Verdeans as ready to absorb Cape Verdean culture. Patriarchal system has given way to new ideas; fathers, male head of families, ready to accept modification of their positions.
- 652- Cape Verdean is concerned with survival. Possible because Cape Verdeans shut out poverty, hunger, drought that pervaded their lives.
- 673- Suburbs phenomenon means no older people to hand down cultural heritage to young (whites). Denial of past and future.
- 714- Many young Creoles (30 or older) speak Criollo.
- 734- At home English was spoken, Criollo used as "secret" language, Ramos did not learn it.
- 765- Criollo taught as oral language. Comments on development of grammar, literature in Criollo, sound of Criollo.

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- 819- Information passed on orally, folk story-tellers and historians.
- 842- Convention of Cape Verdeans helped to instill desire to perpetuate Cape Verdean culture.
- 864- Ideas as energy and vice-versa. Cape Verdean Convention hopefully will create concrete ideas which will be carried out in various programs.
- 934- Ramos believes theory of change needed, quotes Kahil Gibran.
- 966- Similarities between Criollo in Cape Verde and Guinea.
- 990- Discussion of Cape Verdean Convention at Unitarian Church, Benefit Street, Providence.
- 1022- Convention delegates spoke as Cape Verdean-Americans. What was evident was confusion of identity.
- 1040- Genius of the key speaker at Convention was his ability to define, through humor, a shared experience.
- 1060- What next?
- 1078- Ramos' proposal for TV movie on Cape Verdean experience in America; doubts Portuguese government will let him film in Cape Verde Islands. Would like to take his father back to Cape Verde Islands.
- 1111- Wants to go to Africa - Dakar, Senegal. Describes Cape Verdeans as wanderers, like gypsies.
- 1138- Nobody knows the Cape Verdean; exposure will bring power, economic, political, cultural.
- 1160- Defines "saudade" as poignant memories.
- 1200- Cape Verdeans securing identity can encourage Black Americans to assert theirs.
- 1225- Ramos discusses Videotape idea - white masks, black faces.
- 1251- Interviewer is inspired to raise a beard.